

## National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

The obesity epidemic is nothing new for anyone who follows the news. However, new data from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) indicates this problem is becoming progressively worse at a rate faster than ever before. In 2000, the obesity rate in every state was lower than 30 percent. By 2009, obesity rates in nine states had climbed above 30 percent. The continuous increase motivated President Obama to proclaim September as National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. The hope is the special designation will spur activity toward meeting the national goal of solving childhood obesity within a generation.

Nearly 33 percent of the children in the United States are obese or overweight. More than \$150 billion is spent each year in the United States to treat obesity-related medical conditions. These statistics inspired programs that focus on improving nutrition and increasing physical activity. Obese or overweight children have an increased risk for developing chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes, cancers and asthma.

Idaho's obesity rate among children ages 10-17 is 11.8%. A regional Action For Healthy Kids Team (AFHK) was developed to help children change unhealthy behaviors through school policies, systems, even environments. Team members work closely with schools to identify areas that could help lower the obesity numbers. Teachers, administrators, recreation specialists and parents are on northern Idaho's AFHK team, but it's just getting started and will grow. Successful obesity-prevention programs require action on a personal, community, and state level. If you'd like to help with any of these activities or programs, call Sarah Nave, a registered and licensed dietitian with the Panhandle Health District, at 415-5284.